



SELF-SUFFICIENT : The U.S. Army Air Corps is experimenting with "motorised observation balloons." The craft is, in effect, a small "Blimp" which uses its engine to move from one location to another, and to assist in ascent and descent ; normally, it is moored to the ground and operates as a kite balloon.

likewise against an island kingdom which lives on its sea-borne imports. To that extent Britain must deplore the discovery of the art of flying.

On the other hand, ships at sea ought to be safer now that aircraft can reconnoitre and report. The raiding cruiser, in particular, will find in aircraft its worst enemy. In the Great War submarines would not venture to attack a convoy which was escorted by aircraft as well as by warships. This fact adds not a little to the prospects of Britain in a major war.

Hostile shore-based aircraft, however, may attack convoys when they come within range, and the convoy will be easier to spot than the single ship. Escort by fighters seems impracticable, and the anti-aircraft armament of destroyers (which do not make steady platforms) would probably be insufficient to drive off determined raiders. A double escort seems necessary, one against submarines and one against aircraft, and that would make heavy demands on our escort vessels. The moral is that we cannot have too many anti-aircraft cruisers.

Aircraft and the Fleet

THE effect which aircraft can produce in a fleet action must depend very largely on the value which the carrier may prove to possess ; and to this question nobody seems prepared to give a definite answer. No one denies that the existing carriers are very vulnerable, and the design of the new ones now building has not been made

public. But it does seem the general opinion that the daws will all try to peck out daws' eyes—in other words, that the fleet bombers on each side will make their first attacks on the enemy's carriers.

No writer seems to think that the fighters will be able to ensure the safety of their own mother ship, and there remains the question of whether the anti-aircraft guns will be able to do so. They may at least keep the precision bombers high up, and such experience as is available suggests that high bombing very rarely scores a hit on a ship. Dive-bombing will probably score hits, but one school holds that the bombs used by light bombers would not sink a ship, or even reduce its speed, while the damage could be as easily repaired as that caused by small shells.

As for the torpedo-planes, no one seems to have any fixed ideas as to whether they will prove potent instruments of destruction or will turn out to be suicide clubs. The point may only be settled by the next fleet action ; and therefore we all must hope that it will never be settled at all.

The present volume has little to say about catapult aircraft and their uses, but in a previous volume the writers spoke of them as the best spotters for the guns of their own ships. British naval gunnery through the ages has always been superior to that of any other nation, and if the catapult machines make it still more efficient, then the Navy will find that aircraft has added to, not detracted from, its fighting powers.